

# **Connecting to Collections IMLS Planning Grant**

## **Narrative**

### **Need and Rational**

To-date there has been no statewide collections needs assessments conducted for Florida's museums, libraries, archives, or archeological collections. The goal of this planning grant is two-fold: (1) to prepare a broad collections needs assessment that will allow museums, libraries, archives, and Floridians across the state to determine which Heritage Health Index (HHI) recommendations need to be addressed and in what priority, and (2) to educate legislators and decision-makers about their responsibility to preserve collections held in trust by government entities across the state. Organizations collaborating on this proposal all recognize the need for addressing HHI recommendations such as providing safe conditions for collections, developing an emergency plan, and assigning responsibility for collections care. Specific information about Florida's collections is critical for determining priorities, creating solutions, and identifying funding. In the meantime, the need for marshalling public and private support for collections care and raising public awareness about collections care cannot be over-emphasized. This is evident in the budget constraints and limited (often lacking) staff assigned to collections care in large, medium, and small institutions alike.

Conditions unique to the state involve its vulnerability to natural disasters. For example, Florida has sustained four destructive hurricanes and severe tropical storms in the last few years. As a result, many museums, libraries, and archives now have formal disaster plans, although there still is a critical need for training on the specific issues of hurricane preparedness, pre-storm mitigation and recovery methods. The level of disaster preparedness achieved by museums, libraries, archives and archeological collections throughout the state has not been assessed. While several regional collaborations to safeguard and conserve collections damaged by storms emerged in direct response to each specific crisis, it is clear much more needs to be done to create on-going collaborations.

### **The Planning Process**

The scope of work for the planning process includes:

- Formation of a statewide Steering Committee
- Informing state legislators about the need for a collections assessment at the beginning and end of the planning grant
- Development of three or more regional Forums consisting of several components:
  - Session for professionals to identify major collections related issues
  - Opportunities for professionals to identify issues that can be solved locally
  - High profile education session for elected officials responsible for collections within their jurisdiction
  - Forums will be held in tandem with the Florida Association of Museums Foundation (FAMF)'s regional workshops on collections care
  - Media publicity around the Forums to educate Floridians about the importance of the state's patrimony

### **Statewide Steering Committee and Collaborators**

The role of collaborators on this planning grant will be two-fold — to disseminate information about the Forums to ensure broad statewide representation, and to actively

participate in developing parameters of the assessment. Collaborators include the Society of Florida Archivists, Florida Library Association, Florida Art Museum Directors Association, the Department of State, and the Florida Public Archeology Network.

The first step is to form a Steering Committee to achieve the following:

- Develop invitation lists for three regional Forums
- Develop agendas for three regional Forums
- Ensure buy-in from each professional group
- Help ensure the Forum sessions for public officials are well attended
- Ensure proposed assessment is comprehensive of state needs

The Steering Committee will then meet in tandem with the Forums and will remain informed of the development of the project via e-mail, FAMF's website, and video conferencing, as appropriate.

The Steering Committee will be chaired by Graig D. Shaak, Associate Director Emeritus of the Museum of Natural History at the University of Florida, and will include representatives from statewide organizations with responsibilities for library, archive, museum and archeology collections (see attached letters of support).

### **Informing State Legislators**

We will inform state legislators about the need for a collections assessment at the beginning and end of the planning grant, laying the groundwork for a proposed collaboration with the Florida Department of State to conduct the collections assessment in the next phase of the project, and educating legislators about the importance of preserving Florida's collections.

### **Regional Forums**

Three Forums will be developed and held in three regions of the state — Miami, Orlando, and Tallahassee. The function of these Forums is multi-faceted. Following is a detailed description of each function.

The **Forum sessions for professionals** in the archive, library, archeology and museum fields will build on each other, so that issues are identified in Forum One, issues are refined and solutions offered in Forum Two, and broad parameters for the assessment are developed in Forum Three. In addition, a section of the agenda and **networking opportunities** will encourage professionals in each region to identify issues they might work on jointly to solve some issues locally. Specific goals for each of these Forum sessions for professionals are outlined below.

- **Miami Forum** – Session for Professionals in the Field
  - Identify major collections related issues
  - Identify issues which should be solved at the state level
  - Identify issues which can be solved locally and provide opportunities to network so that local collaborations can emerge
  - Identify significant Florida-related collections held outside the state
- **Orlando Forum** – Session for Professionals in the Field
  - Build on the work done at the Miami Forum to identify major collections related issues to be solved statewide

- Outline parameters of a statewide assessment to help museum professionals, elected officials, and the general public understand collections needs, using the HHI to structure discussion
- Identify issues which can be solved locally and provide opportunities to network so that local collaborations can emerge
- Identify significant Florida-related collections held outside the state
- Tallahassee Forum – Session for Professionals in the Field  
*The Tallahassee Forum is scheduled last to coincide with the legislative season and other lobbying events in the state capital on behalf of museums, libraries, archives, and cultural facilities statewide such as: Historic Preservation Week, Museums Day, Heritage Week, Florida Association of Museums Board Meeting, Florida Trust for Historic Preservation Board Meeting, Arts Council Meetings, Folk Life Council Meetings, Library Council Meetings, and grant panels reviewing statewide grant proposals for the Department of State, Division of Cultural Resources.*
  - Build on the efforts at the Miami and Orlando Forums to identify major collections related issues to be solved statewide
  - Refine the parameters of a statewide assessment to help museum professionals, elected officials, and the general public understand collections needs, using the HHI to structure discussion
  - Consider strategies for disseminating assessment results to reinforce public education and lobbying at the city, county and state level
  - Identify significant Florida-related collections held outside the state

Issues that will be determined during the Forum sessions for professionals related to needs assessment planning include:

- Depth of the assessment – i.e. repeat the Heritage Health Index for Florida? Or do a more cursory overview?
- Ways in which to use the assessment process and results as educational tools
- Ways in which to support regional collaborations on collections care
- Ways in which to educate city, county and state legislators about the importance of protecting collections in the public trust
- Identify significant Florida-related collections held by a public entity or nonprofit outside of Florida, make preliminary determination of which are at risk, and if Florida organizations should acquire that collection should it be deaccessioned. Prepare a report on the status and condition of collections outside the state.

**High profile education session for elected officials responsible for collections within their jurisdiction.** At this session a high-impact PowerPoint presentation will help local officials understand that they are ultimately responsible for collections housed in government libraries, archives, museums, and archeology collections. The presentation will emphasize how much is at stake in their community and why they **MUST** play an active role in preserving collections under their purview. Using local funding for collection care will also be stressed. Based on responses and questions raised during these sessions, the PowerPoint presentation will continually be refined.

The Florida Association of Museums Foundation is beginning a series of **regional training workshops** statewide in spring 2008. In spring 2009, these workshops will be scheduled the day before Forums in the same city to encourage broad participation. The workshops will focus on collections management and care, and may include topics such as collections stewardship, acquisitions policies, deaccessioning including transfer, destruction or sale, legal and safety issues, documentation, inventory and risk management. For dual impact,

FAMF will develop these workshops with input from library, archeology and archive collaborators to ensure staff from all types of organizations related to collections care attend. The workshops (not funded through this IMLS grant) will expand the Forums by providing training in collections care for those who may be attending the Forum.

**Media publicity** created around the Forums and regional workshops – in particular the high-profile sessions for city, county and state legislators – will bring attention to collection issues. This begins the process of educating legislators, funders, and citizens in Florida of the importance of collections, which represent the cultural and natural history heritage of the state of Florida.

The **expected results** from the planning process are:

- Education of decision-makers about the importance and obligations of preserving Florida's collections
- Creation of a plan to assess collections priorities in the state of Florida
- Identification of potential funding sources, including Florida and national public and private funding sources, and exploration of support for an in-depth study of Florida's collections from Florida's Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, Division of Historical Resources, and Division of Library and Information Services
- Establishing the foundation for long-term legislative support and public awareness, along with on-going assessment of which tools are most effective in accomplishing these goals

**Products** expected as a result of the planning process include:

- Detailed written plan for conservation needs assessment among library, archive, archeology and museum collections in the state of Florida
- Report on the secondary assessment of Florida-related collections held outside the state so that Florida institutions can locate and monitor any collections at risk
- High-impact PowerPoint presentation for elected officials, which can be used for educational purposes outside the Forums described here
- Local collaborations that happen as a result of the Forums
- Review of media attention to Florida's collections to begin planning how the results of the collections assessment will be disseminated.

## **Project Resources: Budget and Personnel**

### **Personnel and Budget**

FAMF has invited the major museum, library and archives organizations in the state to collaborate in the planning process (letters of support from each are attached). Institutional responsibilities for the project's implementation will be assigned to a representative from each organization. Representatives will serve on a Steering Committee to guide the project and make sure the broad range of collections, and collections needs are represented. They will provide oversight as the project moves forward and help make decisions.

The primary personnel who will be responsible for carrying out administration, coordination, and reporting activities are the FAMF Executive Director, Malinda Horton; Myriam Springuel of Springuel Consulting; and the Steering Committee's Chair, Graig D. Shaak.

FAMF's Executive Director has served in that position for twelve years, consistently looking for ways to serve the needs of Florida's museums through services, training and collaboration. Responsibilities under this grant include:

- Project management and oversight

- Coordinate logistics of each Forum with host organization
- Work with regional leadership to ensure key city, county and state legislators attend the Forums
- Coordinate media and publicity around the Forums

Myriam Springuel of Springuel Consulting has held executive positions at major museums, has been consulting nationally for twelve years, and is currently under contract to FAMF to develop annual conference content and regional workshops. Responsibilities under this grant include:

- Keep collaborators informed about project development
- Coordinate creation of mailing lists representing organizations from around the state for each Forum
- Develop and coordinate content and format for the Forums ensuring all attendees have opportunities to provide input and develop regional networks, and develop high profile sessions for legislators
- Write meeting summaries
- Write a report outlining information that emerges during the Forums about:
  - The state of Florida's collections and collections care needs
  - Collections held by public entities or nonprofits outside the state
- Write proposal to conduct statewide collection assessment

Graig D. Shaak has played a leadership role in collections, collections care, and the museum field throughout his long career. His responsibilities include:

- Chair Steering Committee
- Develop agendas for Steering Committee meetings and structure discussion to determine parameters for collections assessment
- Develop parameters for statewide collection assessment
- Determine if significant collections related to Florida are at risk, so that Florida organizations can monitor their possible acquisition by a Florida organization
- Formalize written reports
- Participate in statewide advocacy
- Serve as information contact for individual museums

The travel budget covers attendance at the Steering Committee meetings and Forums for the three project leads (Horton, Springuel, and Shaak)

## **Sustainability and Long-term Results**

The project will be sustained through local and regional organizational collaborations developed during the planning process. A better understanding of the shared concerns of archives, libraries, museums and archeology collections will undoubtedly lead to future collaborations. Educating decision-makers and legislators at the city, county, and state-level will reinforce the importance of preserving and conserving collections. The proposed planning process is the first step toward a statewide collections needs assessment. The process and results of the assessment will be used to raise public awareness about the importance of collections in the state of Florida and generate support, which in turn will lead to creating safer conditions for collections.